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RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 0020  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000913

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTSRU](#) [RU](#) [GG](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: NICARAGUA AND ABKHAZIA ESTABLISH FORMAL DIPLOMATIC  
TIES

REF: A. MANAGUA 789  
[1](#)B. 2008 MANAUGA 1138  
[1](#)C. 2008 MANAGUA 1124

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4 (B & D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On September 10, 2009, more than a year after Nicaragua was the only country (besides Russia) to recognize the "independence" of the breakaway Georgian republic of Abkhazia, the two countries have now signed agreements to establish formal diplomatic relations. The agreement also came on the same day that news outlets reported that Venezuela had officially recognized the "independence" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This has been widely seen as another step by President Ortega to strengthen Nicaragua,s bilateral relationship with Russia. END SUMMARY

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FORMAL DIPLOMATIC AGREEMENT WITH ABKHAZIA  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) On September 10, 2009, Nicaragua signed an agreement with the breakaway Georgian republic of Abkhazia to establish formal diplomatic ties. The signing ceremony took place within days of the first anniversary of Nicaragua,s recognition of Abkhazia,s "independence" (see reftel B, C). The official Sandinista party news website "El 19" lauded the agreement that was signed by Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Samuel Santos and Abkhazian "Deputy Foreign Minister" Maxim Kvindzhiya. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega met separately with Kvindzhiya and reiterated his support of the "independence" of Abkhazia. Ortega also invited Abkhazian "President" Sergei Bagapsh to visit Nicaragua. Kvindzhiya delivered a letter from "President" Bagapsh to Ortega expressing gratitude to Nicaragua for its support. It was no surprise that Russia,s ambassador to Nicaragua, Igor Kondrashov, praised the signing by exclaiming "these documents have special significance...and they will help flesh out the bilateral relationship with tangible content."

[1](#)3. (SBU) The formal diplomatic agreement signed by Santos and Kvindzhiya contained language not only about future diplomatic cooperation, but also about development and mutual collaboration on political, scientific, ecological, humanitarian and cultural issues. Both countries agreed to

cooperate in establishing direct diplomatic relations between their respective governments, as well as developing ties between social organizations at a local level. (NOTE: The full text of the agreement has not yet been made public. END NOTE)

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COMMENT  
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¶4. (C) As we noted in reftels B & C, Nicaragua,s recognition of Georgia,s two breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in September 2008 had everything to do with strengthening Ortega,s relationship with Russia. For more than a year, Nicaragua was the only country besides Russia to recognize the breakaway republics. Now, the signing of a formal diplomatic agreement with Abkhazia is another "down payment" by Ortega to Russia. We note that Ortega, who regularly gives speeches that fondly recall the Cold War Era and Moscow,s support of the Nicaraguan Revolution, is again actively courting the Kremlin. Ortega seems to believe that this political step - which he can only view as "low-cost" - will generate increased Russian military and economic assistance that will offset the U.S. and European Union aid that was withdrawn after Nicaragua,s fraudulent local elections in November 2008. We believe that Ortega wants to recreate the bipolar conflict and clientelism that once existed between Russia and the West in Central America.

¶5. (C) To a small extent Ortega,s hopes for Russian reciprocity have materialized. As reported in reftel A, Russia "donated" 130 city buses to ease traffic congestion in Managua, as well as a military helicopter to transport President Ortega. These Russian "donations" were heralded by Ortega as "without imposing political or economic conditionality" as opposed to "Yankee (aid) interference" in Nicaragua,s internal affairs. However, a closer look shows that these Russian gifts "with no strings attached" were not donations, but in the case of the buses at least, vehicles to enrich Ortega and his party while bypassing any normal budgeting process through the National Assembly.  
CALLAHAN